

EXCISE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE - A COURSE

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Research Memorandum
 RSB-3,21, February 7, 1962

ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SOVIET INTENTIONS IN THE BERLIN CRISIS

FEBRUARY 1-7, 1962

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Negotiations. The third of the Thompson-Cromyko talks revealed no changes in the Soviet position on Berlin, but it was evident Moscow was still determined to keep the talks going. Thompson tabled two proposals for Soviet consideration, one outlining an all-Berlin solution, the other summarizing an international access authority plan. The date of the fourth of the series of exchanges would now appear to depend on Soviet initiative.

Soviet propaganda media continued to prod the West for a more forthcoming attitude in the talks and criticized US concentration on the access issue, but continued to avoid any discussion of substance. There were increasingly broad hints that should the US persist in its rigid posture, a solution could be found which bypassed the US and its allies entirely.

Soviet overtures to the FRG during the week remained chiefly on the propaganda plane. A sudden rash of historical articles dealing with the Rapallo period has appeared in Soviet media recently, and the Soviet Embassy in Bonn reportedly continuing its proselytizing activities among German political circles, with particular attention to the FDP.

Military Preparations and Demonstrations. There were no changes in Soviet or bloc military posture related to Germany reported during the past week. The only information available to date on the purpose of the Prague meeting of the Warsaw Pact defense ministers (January 30 - February 1) was that contained in the official communique of the meeting: that the participants studied "current questions on the strengthening of the united armed forces."

Concomitantly with the introduction of universal military conscription in East Germany, there has been a marked increase in GDR propaganda denying the right of any GDR citizen to be a Conscientious Objector. The need to be prepared to fight West Germans is characterized as necessary because the Bundeswehr is training Germans to fight Germans.

All indications are that conscription will take place in East Berlin exactly as elsewhere in the GDR.

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APPEALS REVIEW PANEL, DATE 1/17/62

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- 2 -

Berlin and Germany. Beginning February 1, GDR officials have been requiring non-Allied foreign nationals to fill out currency declaration forms on entering East Berlin. The form must also be surrendered as the individual leaves the East Sector.

Slalom barriers on the East Berlin side of the Bornholmerstrasse crossing point were removed from the lane leading to West Berlin. The barriers on the incoming lane remain intact. No explanation was offered for the removal. On the other hand, eight new barricades have now been erected at the Helmsedt-Marienborn checkpoint on the Berlin autobahn; the two steel lift gates installed in each lane are equipped with a hinged ground-level bar in which four-inch steel spikes are embedded. (The spikes are apparently adequate to destroy any average tire.) The barriers along the zonal border between East and West Germany are also apparently being reinforced in depth: five barbed wire installations extending one mile deep have been reported in one area.

The East German railway administration has also introduced new security guards on the S-bahn installations in West Berlin -- patrols of two or three Bahnpolizei employees (West Berlin residents) wearing armbands reading "Railway Police" (Bahnpolizei). The BAPO's have been reported on the station platform as well as on S-bahn property.

Two former refugees from East Germany, now Munich residents, were arrested on the autobahn while traveling to West Berlin and their car confiscated. One has since been released.

Delays of up to ten hours in truck clearances at the Babelsberg checkpoint were reported the night of January 31. No explanations were forthcoming and the backlog cleared up the following morning.

GDR health authorities have again issued an appeal to the West Berlin Senat for joint anti-smallpox measures in view of the continuing smallpox epidemic in Europe. Despite the appeal, however, the East Berlin Health Department has still not answered a week-old message from the West Berlin medical officer offering cooperation in health measures if the need arose. The GER meanwhile has barred at least one Düsseldorf resident from entering East Berlin during the past week, and has now extended its vaccination certificate requirement to residents of the Monschau area in West Germany where the disease allegedly has also been reported.

Information from GDR trade organs indicates East German trade representatives are under instructions to curtail their contacts with West Berlin business representatives and concentrate instead on those from the FRG. West German firms are to be advised the GDR prefers dealing with West German agents of said firms and not with their West Berlin representatives.

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- 3 -

There are indications that 1962 GDR economic plans will provide for a volume of trade with the Federal Republic which is not substantially below the 1961 level. However, it is expected that firm orders will be placed mainly in the second half of the year.

The Iraqi airlines and East German Lufthansa have concluded an agreement whereby the Iraqi Baghdad-to-London flight is allegedly to be routed via Berlin, presumably East Berlin.

ASSESSMENT OF SOVIET INTENTIONS

The course of the Moscow talks and the continuing Soviet efforts to smoke out Western intentions indicate the USSR maintains its preference for negotiations. Also, the scope and depth of Soviet appeals to the FRG suggest a longer range program, rather than a temporary phenomenon.

At the same time, the East Germans are completing physical preparations for possible imposition of tighter controls on the sector and zonal borders and are continuing their usual sporadic harassments of traffic to and from Berlin. They have laid, or are engaged in laying, the propaganda groundwork for a variety of moves, ranging from exploitation of the smallpox scare to interference with air traffic. There are, however, no indications that the implementation of any such move is imminent. (In view of the poor state of GDR health facilities and the serious shortage of medical personnel, GDR attention to the smallpox outbreak may actually represent honest fears rather than politically motivated maneuvering.)

The GDR Lufthansa agreement with the Iraqi air lines may provide the East Germans with their first breakthrough in the civil air field since the Iraqi lines would thereby be the first non-bloc airline to use Schoenefeld as a regular stop-over on a scheduled international flight.

GDR efforts to eliminate West Berlin from East German commercial contacts with the FRG would appear to be an obvious maneuver to isolate the city as much as possible from the Federal Republic. However, the possibility exists that the tactic is Soviet-inspired and represents a long-range program of curtailing GDR economic ties with West Berlin to a minimum, with the Soviets taking over the leading role in Berlin's commercial relations with the bloc. Reports circulated several months ago that a Soviet trade office was being transferred from Cologne to East Berlin for the purpose of developing trade contacts in West Berlin. Other reports at the year's end indicated alleged Soviet plans to place large-scale industrial orders in West Berlin in midsummer of 1962.

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THIRD THOMPSON-GROMYKO MEETING FEBRUARY 1, 1962

The third Thompson-Gromyko meeting February 1 resulted in no progress, but Gromyko was careful to indicate Soviet interest in a continuation of talks. Gromyko's purpose to date appears to be to conduct a holding operation, defending the outposts of the Soviet position while determining the firmness of that of the West. His several references to a possible separate treaty seem designed to prod the West to back away from the proposals tabled by Ambassador Thompson (the Soviets almost certainly do not regard them as representing final positions) and probably are not a reflection of Soviet intent.

Gromyko repeated his disparaging assessment of the international access authority but again carefully stopped short of rejecting it flatly. Izvestiya editor Adzhubei, meanwhile, injected a hint of a specific shift in the substance of the Soviet position when he broached to the President the possibility of GDR control of the Berlin access routes under international supervision. Also, Gromyko's references to the need of respect for GDR sovereignty seemed to be more pro forma than before (e.g., his view that the US attitude of "looking down on the GDR" was basically improper).

In contrast to his relatively routine defense of GDR sovereignty, Gromyko again objected vigorously to a West Berlin plebiscite and insisted once more that a Berlin settlement will not depend on the will of the West Berliners. His reaction indicates Soviet sensitivity to any such demonstration of "self-determination" in Berlin, if for no other reason than for the repercussions it could have in East Berlin and East Germany. Gromyko's position, incidentally, partially contradicts the communist line that the disposition of East Berlin is exclusively the concern of the East German regime.

While Gromyko rejected the plebiscite suggestion contained in the US position, he did not comment on the point that an end to the occupation status would automatically end Allied suspension on Berlin's integration into the Federal Republic, which was also mentioned by Ambassador Thompson. Gromyko had also failed to respond on this issue at the second meeting as well. Whether this silence points to a possible shift in hitherto firm Soviet opposition to West Berlin's integration remains to be seen.

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